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Introduction: The politics of remembering and the myth of the Blitz

In*: Media, Myth and Terrorism: A discourse-mythological analysis of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings.*

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1. Introduction: The politics of remembering and the myth of the blitz

Background, aims and objectives

This book is about terrorism and mythological storytelling in British newspapers. By analysing press responses to the July 7th bombings it provides some insight to the ways that war and conflict are portrayed in past and present contexts. Throughout the theoretical and analytical ground covered in this book I will explore the ideological nuances of mythological storytelling and the highly politicised processes of remembering and recontextualising the past. This book will investigate some of the discursive mechanisms that construct mythologies past and present contexts. In doing so, I propose and adopt a discourse-mythological approach (DMA) to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which I return to in chapter 2. This book is cross-disciplinary in its readership appeal and areas of academic interest, but it primarily serves two purposes: it shows how myth theory can be adopted in approaches to discourse studies; whilst showing mythologists how methodological approaches to discourse studies can enrich the scope and application of myth theory.

What happens when stories draw on popular but simplistic, historical accounts of a nation's past? When this happens, what alternative stories are supressed and why would they otherwise provide equally important accounts of the past? What happens when inaccurate accounts are often preserved and reused to serve political and ideological interests in the present? This book will help to answer those questions by focusing on the historical and contemporary complexities behind a popular story (memory) of the Second World War: the myth of the Blitz. I will explain why this is referred to as a myth and how this myth recurred in contemporary storytelling that attempted to understand, explain and respond to the July 7th

bombings in 2005. The bombings saw the most costly, single attack on London since the Second World War. Carried out by four British citizens, suicide bombs on London's public transport system killed 56 people. In responses from the press, politicians and public alike the Second World War became a common analogy for understanding and explaining the events once fully realising the level of devastation caused.

As Ian McClaine points out: 'British civilian morale during the Second World War has subsequently assumed the quality of myth' (1979:1). The Blitz myth is a story which, 'encapsulates for its believers all the qualities they see themselves as possessing in circumstances of extreme adversity' (ibid:1). Roland Manthorpe has more recently offered an account of this reliance on past events: 'Press, politicians and public looked to history, in particular, to the history of London's Blitz, in reacting to the fatal attacks on the capital's transport network' (Manthorpe, 2006). Manthorpe describes how 'the nation's historical imagination followed proud and explicit comparisons in British newspapers to the events of the Blitz and London's resilience against the threat of Nazi Germany' (ibid). The myth of the spirit has survived extensive questioning and challenges. The nation's identity has been 'formed, first and foremost, in the national memory. Memory is historical, of course, but, transient and partial, it is not history' (Manthorpe, 2006). Subsequently, in response to the London bombings, 'British men and women instinctively and unselfconsciously pulled the Blitz from their store of historical memories' (ibid). It is this contemporary role of historical memory and discursive connections between past and present that I examine in this book.

Many sources after the bombings referred to the attacks as an act of war. This provided some discursive context for popular memories of London in 1940 as the frame for interpreting and understanding the attacks. At the time, I was struck by what appeared to be an inaccurate

parallel with the past; the circumstances that London faced in 2005 were drastically different to that of 1940. Notably, the perpetrators on July 7th were British citizens, rather than a foreign threat or invasion. Neither was this a threat that equated to the military force of another country, like Nazi Germany. From historical accounts of 1940 that have revised popular myths of Britain's past – stiff-upper-lip stories of unity, universal calm, defiance, resilience and stoicism – historians have highlighted less popular memories of that time. Subsequently, it is clear that invocations of the 'Blitz spirit', which I return to below, are problematic in both past and present contexts. These versions of past events often suppress other stories that provide less flattering accounts of Britain in the cultural, class, religious, racial and behavioural frictions that have occurred and continue to recur within the tensions of contemporary society. For these reasons it was the ideological role of Second World War mythology in storytelling after July 7th that aroused my interests in this research.

It is common for societies to draw upon historical accounts (constructions) of the nation whilst attempting to understand who they are in the present. But it is crucial that we understand these processes of remembering (and forgetting) as highly political social practices. The politics of remembering often involves simultaneous dynamics of forgetting (Kelsey, 2012a; Wodak, 2009a). These processes are influenced by the interests and objectives of those who are able to shape contextual accounts of the past:

> The way we deal with the past is part of 'Vergangenheitspolitik' (politics of dealing with the past): Different groups, political parties or politicians prefer different interpretations with a view to aligning their own positions (as advantageously as possible) with the official version of history. Hence, history written with hindsight and in-stilled with meaning like a 'narrative' must be invariably perceived as a

> construction. Historical context needs to be understood as the outcome of a social process whereby past events that are regarded as worthy vehicles for moral concepts are selected and made the objects of remembrance and commemoration (Wodak, 2009:15).

Previous debates have shown that the dynamics of social, collective and individual memory are hugely complex phenomena (Halbwachs, 1992; Pickering and Keightley, 2012; Garde-Hansen, 2011). Other works in this area have also examined mythology in relation to the social dynamics of memory (Bell, 2003; Poole, 2008; Shahzad, 2011). Due to the cross-disciplinary context of my research this book does not always draw on prevalent works in memory studies. However, it certainly holds a shared in interest with these works and offers relevant insights to the field. Previous works on journalism and memory (Zelizer and Allan, 2001; Zelizer, 2008; Zelizer and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2014) reflect the significance of news media in mnemonic processes and the parallels that journalists draw between past and present events. Other works on journalistic storytelling (O'Donnell, 2003; Bird and Dardenne, 1998; Lule, 2001; Kelsey, 2014a) have demonstrated the relevance of myth theory in analyses of news media. As I have previously argued, 'journalists, politicians and the public are caught up in complex fields of cultural rituals … and social practices … which influence and are influenced by popular memory' (2012a:24). Hence, this book offers DMA as a systematic analytical framework that can be adopted to investigate discursive constructions and ideological operations of mythology in journalistic storytelling.

This book will draw attention to the ideological influences and assumptions of cultural identities and stories of who 'we' (Britain) are as a nation. Regardless of any reader's political position, bias or allegiance this book should enlighten them to the nuances and ideological contentions that occur in attempts to construct stories that are often told to serve

political agendas and uphold social ideals. Even if readers disagree with some of my observations, analysis and conclusions, I hope a few things are clear and apparent from this research: the world is more complex than we are often led to believe; our 'common sense' perceptions are not as objective or accurate as we might think; it is important to understand the social role of mythology in past and present contexts; and storytelling is often a manipulative process in which accounts of the past are adapted to serve ideological purposes in the present. But it is important to note one thing about my intentions here: this book is not about lies. At no point am I interested in accusing any party of lies or dishonesty. Whilst untruths exist in the world, especially in storytelling, they are not my primary concern in an examination of myth. In Christopher Flood's approach to political myth, to which I return in chapter 2, he states:

> Studies of myth almost invariably open with the caveat that the reader should not confuse the popular, pejorative usage of the term myth as a synonym for falsehood, distortion, or delusion with the scholarly usage which stresses that myths have unquestioned validity within the belief systems of the social groups which cherish them.

As I explain below, this analysis defines myth as a simplifying process that functions ideologically in the messages that it delivers and suppresses.

It is significant that this book cannot account for the vast ground that such a topic relates to across so many academic disciplines and sociological influences. This limitation demonstrates the importance of understanding the mechanisms of mythological storytelling and its ideological role in society due to the endless connections and relevance it has to our

perceptions of issues and events that occur in the world that we live. Memory studies, terrorism studies, journalism studies, cultural studies, media studies, historical studies, sociology, linguistics and discourse studies are just some of the academic disciplines that might claim a central interest to the topic of this book. It is impossible for me to account for the vast theoretical, analytical and methodological landscapes across all of these disciplines. Therefore, I ask readers to appreciate that this book adopts one interdisciplinary framework that I have developed in my DMA model. DMA should offer readers a systematic and innovative framework, providing rigorous analysis that is relevant and insightful to disciplines that might stretch beyond the scope of this book.

As readers will also learn from the ground I cover, it is impossible to account for the vast contextual material and research existing around the sociological phenomena that this book concerns, in areas including but not limited to: race; class; gender; economics; history; politics; ideology; and power. These are among the endless topics that I touch upon but cannot do justice within the scope of this analysis. So above all else I hope to provide suggestions and motivations that mobilise further thoughts on the topics this analysis relates to. I hope readers can adopt, adapt, refine and, if necessary, critique my approach to DMA that I simply offer as an analytical toolkit. Like any toolkit it might include new tools over time, it might be used for different jobs and purposes, and it might wear old or need updating. Either way, DMA offers a nuanced approach to understanding discourse, mythology, and the ideological role of storytelling in society. Chapter 2 will explain the theoretical and methodological aspects of DMA before the following analysis chapters explore the discursive complexities of British newspaper stories for a month after the bombings. This should provoke readers into further, critical reflection of cross-generational storytelling – not only on this topic but other topics concerning memory and mythology within and beyond journalism.

But before we go any further let's clarify exactly what I mean by mythology and the theoretical approach that is adopted for this book.

This book's approach to mythology

Myth provides a particular way of representing and understanding the world. Whilst it promotes one way of seeing or discussing something, it restricts and denies other interpretations or understandings. As Jack Lule explains: 'Myth upholds some beliefs but degrades others. It celebrates but also excoriates. It affirms but it also denies' (Lule, 2001:119). Myth distorts meaning and often suppresses complexity. Meanings created by myth are formed via associations with other concepts or ideas that appear to be connected in some way, justifying and naturalising the way in which something is defined. Barthes once referred to the 'naturalness with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history' (1972:11). It is this impression of a natural (rather than cultural or historical) connection between one thing and another set of ideas, which characterises Barthes approach to myth. For Barthes myths are cultural constructed through semiotic systems (signs) that hold denotative and connotative meanings. Meanings formed as myths appear to exist naturally even though they occur culturally. As Barthes explains, 'mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things' (Barthes, 1993:110). For example, a picture of a rose is, denotatively, a rose. But on a connotative level the rose would be associated with other meanings, such as passion, or romance (see also Branston and Stafford, 1996). The only thing that exists prior to any subsequent association or meaning is the object (the rose) itself. So identifying myth offers a way of deconstructing and questioning the cultural meanings and

representations that shape understandings of the world.

If meaning can only be constructed culturally then it is important that some consideration is given to the social contexts and processes of representation; considering who is speaking, what they are saying (or not saying) and the purpose that meanings serve. For example, the attachment of a dominant set of ideas around public responses to terrorism privileges a particular voice (or voices) and perspective(s) over others. Whilst a mythological storytelling might not construct lies or untruths, they can be highly distorting due to the preferred, exaggerated or narrow, definitive accounts that they provide. As Lule explains, 'Myth legitimises and justifies positions. Myth celebrates dominant beliefs and values. Myth degrades and demeans other beliefs that do not align with those of the storyteller' (Lule, 2001: 184). It is the ideological role of myth that needs to be addressed when considering why it matters and why it is should come under scrutiny.

According to Barthes, the role of myth legitimises the meaning of things in a way that transcends any grounds for debate or questioning. Myth provides clarity in meanings because 'purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact' (Barthes in Calder, 1991:3). In a historical context myth can overlook the complexity of events. Then by relying on 'what is immediately visible, it organises a world which is … without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity' (ibid:3). It is at this point of clarity that 'things appear to mean something by themselves' (ibid:3) and are detached from speculation or doubt. Myths are constantly clarifying, distorting and naturalising meanings, often at the cost of depth and complexity. In demonstrating the way that myth works, Barthes analysed the front cover of a *Paris-Match*

magazine. The image is of a black soldier in a French uniform saluting what is assumed to be the French flag. Barthes claims that the meaning of this picture delivers a particular set of messages:

> … France is a great Empire, … all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and … there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors (1993:115).

Barthes argued that the soldier is deprived of history, thus becoming a form of gestures. History becomes a deprived part of the meaning, whilst the meaning itself remains full due to the message that it delivers. The meaning and message that Barthes identifies in the *Paris Match* picture has simplified and suppressed the historical complexities and politics of French colonialism.

As Duncan Bell argues, 'Myth serves to flatten the complexity, the nuance, the performative of human history; it presents instead a simplistic and often uni-vocal story' (2003:75). The very principle of myth is to transform history into nature. Jack Lule refers to myth as 'a societal story that expresses prevailing ideals, ideologies, values and beliefs. More broadly myth is an essential social narrative… and forms to offer exemplary models for social life' (cited in Rodgers, 2000:200). Nonetheless, 'reading through' myth does not necessarily hinder its influence. Barthes argues that the detail of a newspaper article may proceed beyond the myth and address some elements of complexity that do not support the immediate impression that the article has initially (and dominantly) portrayed, supported, and implemented. In fact, we will see many instances of this happening throughout the analysis chapters. But Barthes argues that even when this does happen myth has already caused an

‘immediate impression – it does not matter if one is later allowed to see through the myth, its actions assumed to be stronger than the rational explanations that may later belie it’ (1993:130).

The key function of myth is the construction or deliverance of a concept, sign or archetype that appears as common sense. This is why myth can be ‘experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden… but because they are naturalised’ (ibid:131). Barthes sums up this naturalising process as follows:

> In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (ibid:143).

This ‘blissful clarity’ that Barthes describes is often constructed through binary forms of meaning and understanding mechanisms of representation. Binary oppositions contribute to constructions of spectacle, which provide an efficient format for portraying particular meanings. In terms of understanding conflict, Barthes’ approach to the spectacle of excess and morality provides a further insight to the dimensions of myth that I explore in this book.

Morality in myth provides a persuasive dynamic that we often see in storytelling. Moral storytelling reflects the conventions of commonly accepted cultural ideals, values and archetypes. Barthes used an analysis of wrestling (as dramatic performance) to explore the

role of excess in a model of suffering and justice that reflects moral values in society; a wrestler is expected to experience suffering in the process of gaining a higher moral position that provides him with a right to revenge and restore justice. For Barthes, this justice confirms a moral victory of good over evil. The body of the wrestler is a definitive feature of the spectacle ahead; their costumes, gestures and attitudes acts as signs that indicate the role they will play in the theatrics of morality (Barthes, 1993: 17). It is in this process of spectacle and its display of actions through physique that Barthes sees wrestling entering a similar realm to that of the theatre: 'What the public wants is the image of passion, not passion itself. There is no more a problem of truth in wrestling than in the theatre' (ibid: 18). According to Barthes, there is a 'moral mechanism' which functions theatrically to suit the audience's needs (ibid:19).

It is in this moral appeal that wrestling holds its authority. Key to this form of myth, in the moral actions that it pursues, is retaliation and the defeat of a legitimate enemy. As Barthes explains, 'What is … displayed for the public is the great spectacle of Suffering, Defeat and Justice' (ibid: 19). It is the process of suffering that triggers an amplified representation of morality: 'The wrestler who suffers in a hold which is reputedly cruel (an arm-lock, a twisted leg) offers an excessive portrayal of Suffering' (ibid: 19). Barthes stresses the importance of recognising the moral intentions of the wrestling spectacle and its relevance in a mythological sense. He explains that 'what wrestling is above all meant to portray is a moral concept: that of justice' (ibid: 21). The notion of revenge is significant to the punishment and justice that prevails:

> The baser the action of the 'bastard', the more delighted the public is by the blow which he justly receives in return. If the villain – who is of course a coward – takes

> refuge behind the ropes, claiming unfairly to have a right to do so by a brazen mimicry, he is inexorably pursued there and caught, and the crowd is jubilant at seeing the rules broken for the sake of a deserved punishment… Naturally it is the pattern of Justice which matters here, much more than its content: wrestling is above all a quantitative sequence of compensations (an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth) (ibid: 21-22).

The crowds participate in this spectacle, in their calls to 'Give it to him' and 'Make him pay'. As we know from our own experiences, this model of retaliation and justice (an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth) is common in cultural attitudes and responses to events of wrong doing or when perceptions of injustice are concerned. These moral mechanisms are often socially engrained in conceptual understandings of justice. This applies to our individual and collective moral codes and conventions that are often played out and expressed via the media but run through sections of society as a whole. This is not to say that we all hold the same values: as this book shows, acts of violence mobilise multiple responses from different personal and ideological positions since we can all critically reflect and object to cultural values and conventions in our own ways. Barthes' model is just one useful way of understanding the mechanisms of moral storytelling. As I have previously argued in my discourse-mythological analysis of media stories about bankers during the financial crisis, 'moral storytelling draws on numerous archetypal conventions beyond Barthes model alone' (2014:np).

This book views journalism as one of many systems of storytelling (or mythmaking) that reflects archetypal conventions of mythology in diachronic and synchronic contexts. By following the caution of Flood's nuanced approach to myth, I do not make overt assumptions

or assertions about 'the intentions of those who tell myths or judge the state of mind of those who appear to believe them' (2001). However, I do believe that 'plausible inferences can be drawn from contemporary evidence of what these tellers and believers say or do' (Flood, 2001). As Lule states, 'Like myth tellers from every age, journalists can draw from the rich treasure trove of archetypal stories and make sense of the world' (2001:18). In *Good Writing for Journalists*, Angela Phillips refers to the 'basic characters archetypes or myths, that are used by filmmakers and novelists' (2011:12). This is not to suggest that journalists will always hold these codes consciously in mind or calculatedly draw upon on them when they construct a story. However, Phillips accounts for the moral codes of storytelling that 'are told and retold in ways that conform to the needs and the norms of the particular society in which they are being written, and they are adapted as societal norms change' (2011:12). My analysis chapters consider the recurrence of past events and stories that are recontextualised according to their present purpose and setting. This enables us to understand the diachronic mechanisms, which contextually adapt memories and stories according to their synchronic contributions. The next section will revisit some of the historical perspectives that have examined the formulation and popular memories of wartime mythology, which so often feature in contemporary accounts of British identity.

The Myth of the Blitz

Those storytelling components that made the Blitz myth so symbolically persuasive in 1940 have preserved its prominence in a contemporary context. This myth has been examined by various scholars who have confirmed its role, but also challenged its validity, as a way of identifying the British public during the Second World War (Calder, 1991, 2003; Connelly,

2004; Manthorpe, 2006; Heartfield, 2005; Tulloch, 2006; McClain, 1979; Ponting, 1990, 1994; Panayi, 1995; Thoms, 1995). As McClain explains, 'many writers have been content to assert that the nation won through because the morale of the population won through' (1979:1). He states that such compliance almost reflected a fear that 'too closer inquiry might erode the foundations of the myth' (ibid:1). So, addressing the role of this myth involves some consideration of complexity and some inquiry into those elements that are not discussed as a result of the myth's simplifying influence. If the simplistic and ideological role of myth can serve certain interests then there are legitimate questions to ask regarding the historical context of Blitz mythology.

The concept of Britain as a defiant and resilient nation was a message deliberately formed to represent and control morale. The Ministry of Information was created in 1939 and their 'prime duty on the home front was to sustain civilian morale' (ibid:1). Churchill's 'peroration aimed at… British public opinion' (Calder, 1999:110) played a central role in establishing a theme of resilience and defiance in the Blitz spirit. Calder quotes the historic speech of Churchill:

> We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost maybe, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the new world, with all its

power and might, steps forth to the rescue and liberation of the old (1999:110).

It is significant that the part saying ‘then our empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by and British fleet, would carry on the struggle’ is not commonly referred to in popular accounts of this speech. There is perhaps a cultural and historical reluctance to be reminded of Britain as a colonial power. Churchill also delivered other speeches that did not reflect this defiant attitude at the time; his speeches were often limited to the House of Commons and were not broadcast to the nation. In one instance, Churchill said: ‘I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat’ (cited in Ponting, 1990:157). In fact, Churchill rarely spoke to the nation as a whole. Ponting states that throughout ‘the gloomy winter of 1940-1941, he gave no inspirational address to the people’ and after his speech on September 11th 1940 he did not speak to the nation again until February 1941 (1990:159). Still the role of myth has projected a preferred version of history that serves a popular cultural purpose in constructions of British identity. Of course, this is not to be critical of Churchill either: one should not deny his iconic impact, the bravery of those he spoke of or play down his own role and contribution in any way. But it demonstrates the historical complexities that popular memory can leave out through the mythological mechanisms of storytelling and remembering.

According to Ponting, Churchill’s famous speech holds a mythical quality in itself. Churchill’s speeches aimed to inspire and unite the nation into a state of high morale and have become engrained in the essential mythology of 1940 (Ponting, 1990:157). By considering another extract from one of Churchill’s speeches about the Blitz we can see the common familiar language and descriptions of Britain as an island race and London as a resilient city:

> These cruel, wanton, indiscriminate bombings of London are, of course, a part of Hitler's invasion plans. He hopes, by killing large numbers of civilians, and women and children, that he will terrorise and cow the people of this mighty imperial city, and make them a burden and anxiety to the Government…Little does he know the spirit of the British nation, or the tough fibre of the Londoners…who have been bred to value freedom far above their lives. This wicked man, the repository and embodiment of many forms of soul-destroying hatred, this monstrous product of former wrongs and shame, has now resolved to try to break our famous Island race by a process of indiscriminate slaughter and destruction. What he has done is to kindle a fire in British hearts, here and all over the world, which will glow long after all traces of the conflagration he has caused in London have been removed.

What is interesting here is the hereditary discourse that runs through Churchill's cross-generational reference to Londoners 'who have been bred to value freedom far above their lives'. This hereditary dynamic is a recurring theme in my analysis chapters – Londoners are seen to take on a spirit that is naturally handed down to them from the past. As we will see shortly, this spirit Churchill spoke of did not reflect the morale of many Londoners. But what is equally significant here is that it shows how these traits of identity and British characteristics can be traced back well before 1940. Hence chapter 2 accounts for Hall's *narration of the nation* where he defines the dimensions of identity that stretch so far back they become 'lost in the fog of time' (Wodak, 1999:23-24).

According to Ponting, the manner of Churchill speeches in their 'self-consciously archaic style and mixture of historic and biblical references have romanticised Britain's isolation and near defeat as its 'Finest Hour'' (1990:4). Ponting makes an important point here. When we

examine the archetypal structures of hero mythology we often follow the journey or mission that heroes set out upon from humble circumstances, facing challenges and triumphs along the way (Lule, 2001). Rose refers to the efforts that were made to define the British public during the Second World War. She describes the image of 'self-sacrificing, relentlessly cheerful, and inherently tolerant people who had heroically withstood the Blitz' (Rose, 2003:2-3). This was 'a country imagined as a unified land of 'ordinary people'' (ibid:3). Heartfield also draws on Arthur Mee's view: ''The Londoner, proud Cockney, became a warrior' during the Blitz. 'London can take it' became the common man's cry'' (Heartfield, 2005). He also points out that the phrase was designed and premeditated for morale rather than being a true product of morale itself: ''We can take it' … was a line from a Ministry of Information film, *London Can Take It*. An American reporter, Quentin Reynolds, wrote the script: 'I can assure you, there is no panic, no fear, no despair in London Town.... London can take it'' (ibid). As is often the case with myth, this meaning has been created and manufactured with the intention of serving a particular purpose.

As Heartfield argues, the formation of 'We can take it' supports the idea of an elite voice that speaks on behalf of public opinion: ''We can take it' evoked pride. But it also heaped shame on anyone who raised doubts' (Heartfield, 2005). Heartfield notes how the 'We can take it' this slogan was 'put in the mouths of Londoners' whilst the term actually held limited relevance to those Londoners who had no choice in such matters (ibid). Other interpretations of events also contradict the role of this manufactured slogan. Even though 'the Ministry of Information was impressed by the lack of panic, tens of thousands of people tramped off into the Kent countryside during the first raids, without any real direction' (ibid). One incident on 3 March 1943 saw '173 people were killed in a panic crush on the steps of Bethnal Green Underground station, though no bombs fell on east London that night' (ibid). Heartfield refers

to the huge losses of life that London suffered along with masses of damage to crucial infrastructure from homes to warehouses (2005).

These are all mythological components that feature in the recontextualisation of events from 1940 to 2005 through the contemporary discourses that I explore in this book. The fact that 'London can take it' was a manufactured phrase that has dominated representations of Londoners during the Blitz demonstrates the powerful and naturalising role of myth. 'London can take it' was not a line exclusive to the maintenance of British public morale either. Reynolds first used this line in Germany rather than London whilst reporting there between 1933 and 1940 for Colliers Magazine (ibid). An article called 'Trained to Take It' depicted how well Germany was prepared for a British bombing campaign. The film *London Can Take It* was directed by Humphrey Jennings. Jennings was 'a left-wing contemporary of WH Auden and Christopher Isherwood at Cambridge and the GPO film unit, whose condescension to ordinary people was often commented on' (ibid). However, during the Blitz, Jennings made significant observations on the state of public morale:

> Jennings thought that the divisions between the intellectuals and the masses were breaking down. 'Some of the damage in London has been pretty heartbreaking', Jennings wrote to his wife in October 1940, 'but what an effect it has had on the people!': 'What warmth - what courage! What determination...a curious kind of unselfishness is developing.... We have found ourselves on the right side and the right track at last!' (ibid).

When the public were polled, the Ministry of Information were relieved to find that there appeared to be no collapse of morale (ibid). However, these findings can be questioned. As

Manthorpe explains, 'Historians have picked over the reports of Mass-Observation, the wartime government's polling agency, that show bombed Britain panicked and demoralised. But the myth persists' (Manthorpe, 2006).[1] Heartfield himself refers to the Mass Observation project's account of a less calm and content London. One reporter described the 'unplanned hysteria' in London during the Blitz in 1940. She argued at the time that 'the press versions of life going on normally in the East End are grotesque. There was no bread, no milk, no electricity, no gas, no telephones.... The press version of people's smiling jollity and fun are a gross exaggeration' (Heartfield, 2005).

Ponting also challenges the popular view of wartime Britain. He refers to Britain as a 'deeply divided and unequal society' in which the pressures of the war had a heavy impact on the poorest classes in the country (1990:138). As Ponting points out, crime rates increased 'by nearly sixty percent during the war (three times the rate of annual increase before the war)' (ibid:142). The Blitz provided a chance for opportunist thefts through looting. In fact, the looting became so frequent in London that the police had to set up an anti-looting squad to try and curb the problem (ibid:142). Second Lieutenant Arthur Bennie, of the 7th Battalion, King's Regiment refers to the occasions when they had to 'fix bayonets to prevent people entering bank vaults that were opened by the bombing' (cited in Levine, 2006:411-412). Due to the social disruption caused by the war juvenile crime also increased by forty-one percent in the year after the war started (ibid:143). According to Panayi (1995), racism also increased dramatically during the war. He claims 'some of the most systematic persecution of racial and ethnic minorities in recent history took place during the two world wars' (1995:204). During the Second World War levels of hostility towards minorities increased 'especially against those associated with the enemy' (ibid:204). According to Calder, anti-semitism inflamed

[1] Rowland Manthorpe won the 2006 Ben Pimlott Prize for Political Writing. This is taken from an edited version of the award winning essay.http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/jul/01/featuresreviews.guardianreview29

during the war, especially when 'better off Jews bought their way out of London' (1999:167). Fascists would display anti-semitic graffiti on walls, blaming them for the war. Hostility towards Jews often occurred in air raid shelters as well (ibid:167). The irony of much social unrest at the time meant that most victims of racism were actually refugees from Nazi Germany.

As well as racial frictions, divides between social classes at this time contradicted the idea of a nation that pulled together on the same level. Ponting describes the relative ease in which privileged classes adapted to the war and continued as normal in their lifestyles that were fairly unaffected. While the east end was enduring a German bombing raid and civilians had taken cover in the local underground stations, numerous ministers and senior officials were enjoying the luxurious catering and accommodation of the Dorchester Hotel (1990:140-141). Conservative MP 'Chips' Channon describes the scene at the hotel, stating: 'London lives well: I've never seen more lavishness, more money spent, or more food consumed than tonight, and the dance floor was packed' (cited in Ponting, 1990:140-141). At the same time costs of living had increased at a higher rate than the average wage, and the government had introduced 'a new regressive form of taxation in the first wartime budget' (ibid:139).[2] Curran and Seaton state that even in 1940 some people were as opposed to the bureaucratic British administration, as to the Nazi's themselves (1997:134). Addison also talks about troops returning from fighting and holding politicians responsible for their appalling experiences (1994:107). Churchill's own judgement as a military leader has often come under scrutiny as well (Calder, 1991, 1999; Ponting, 1990). But I am cautious not to overstate the divides here or misrepresent political and privileged classes as being completely unaffected. This would be equally simplistic since many people across the social spectrum would have been hugely

[2] It is also worth noting that following the Second World War Churchill suffered a landslide defeat in the general election.

affected in various personal, social and economic contexts. But these experiential differences between social classes are significant complexities that are suppressed by the myth of wartime social unity.

However, according to Connelly, 'sensationalist revisionists', often attempting to debunk the myth of the Blitz, recall the fact that 'crime rose during the Blitz and, and gleefully reproduced reports on low morale' (Connelly, 2005:130). Connelly refers to the revisionist observation that claims 'Britain's survival was hardly a unique occurrence to be celebrated as such' when considering that Germany and Japan also endured heavy and severe bombings (ibid:130). But Connelly himself takes Smith's view that such an approach is limited in its usefulness. He argues that the myth was not necessarily supposed to 'mislead the British, as Ponting implies, but to help them to survive not just another political mess but the greatest threat in their national history' (ibid:130). The role of this 'myth was necessary to help them to make sense of the disaster and to fight on' (ibid:130). This point considers myth in a more positive light and it should not be overlooked either. As my neutral approach to myth and ideology clarifies in chapter 2, I am not concerned with proposing a definitive version of history or current events through the binaries of right and wrong or true and false. Whilst we can always address falsities as and when they occur, nuanced accounts of mythologies should not shy away from the social and historical purposes that storytelling serves, even if we are critical of some stories. But in the same way that myths should not necessarily be attacked on the grounds of lies of falsehood, the absent complexities should not remain suppressed either.

Historian Lucy Noakes believes that the Blitz is such a commonly referred to event of the war because it is 'an easily understood, dramatic story that does not require much expert knowledge of military, diplomatic or political history' (cited in Connelly, 2005:130).

Connelly also refers to the visual qualities that provide constant, repeated and reconstructed accounts of the Blitz that provide the feeling of a film accompanied by a suitable script:

> It has a great script: a small gang of fiercely independent people refuse to cave in to the bad guys. The bad guys decide to punish the wilful defiance in an appalling show of might. Despite the hardships, the small gang becomes more tightly bound, laughs in the face of terror, takes everything the forces of evil can dish out and sends them packing. A simple story, but full of drama, full of powerful images and, for the British, scripted a long time before 1940. (Connelly, 2005:131).

This simple but powerful script has clearly proved successful since its wartime production. As McClaine observed: 'Since the war the myth has been continually nourished by the tendency of politicians and others to call for a revival of 'the Dunkirk spirit' whenever Britain has faced a threat to her well being' (McClaine, 1979:1). The Dunkirk spirit draws on different wartime events to those of the Blitz but it follows a similar set of archetypal conventions in its construction of moral victory in the face of defeat. It is consistent with the Second World War mythologies that tell the story of triumph and courage, overcoming the odds against a powerful enemy.

The myth that focuses on London and the response of Londoners is also taken for granted in its reference to Britain as a nation. Other cities also suffered heavy bombing raids but the country's morale was encompassed by the mythical traits of London's response. One civilian in Liverpool recalls how low morale had got in Liverpool during the Blitz and defied Churchill's attempts to speak on their behalf:

> Churchill was telling us how brave we all were and that we would never surrender. I tell you something – the people of Liverpool would have surrendered overnight if they could have. It's all right for people in authority, down in their steel-lined dugouts but we were there and it was just too awful. People were walking out of the town to escape the bombing (cited in Levine, 2006:412).

Another witness claims that Liverpool was the only city where they encountered demonstrations in opposition to the war. Groups were calling for negotiations with the Nazi's for peace and were 'marching with banners indicating that they wanted an end to the war' (ibid:412). On the other hand, Thoms (1995) refers to reports that low morale was less distinct in Liverpool than any other city: whilst there were pockets of unrest the general level of morale in Liverpool remained high. He refers to one report as follows: 'Nowhere have we seen more drunkness, more singing and shouting and cat-singing, more picking up, or more people being sick' (1995:8). Official reports (Ponting, 1990:164) described a national deterioration of morale on a deplorable level. Coventry saw widespread depression, hysteria, and terror; with women screaming and crying in the streets and fireman apparently attacked. Much of Bristol felt that the British government had let them down and many were prepared to negotiate for peace. From Portsmouth there were reports of looting and a state that was beyond the police's control. Reports from Plymouth claimed that people had reached their limit and would not be able to cope with much more bombing. The Bishop of Winchester reported that Southampton was 'broken in spirit' when he visited after the Blitz (ibid:164). Again, this is not to overstate these accounts but these stories are often suppressed by a myth in which they are incompatible and contradict preferred constructions of British identity.

Morale is also difficult to define and cannot be represented in a monolithic form. There were

various ways of interpreting morale and different experiences across numerous reports and accounts. Liverpool itself provides conflicting views of morale and thus a generalised definition of the public mood at the time can only exist in the form of myth. Morale in other cities demonstrates the simplifying and generalising manner of myth. When the myth also attempts to depict defiance in the British public's ability to carry on as normal, the harsh reality was that people had no choice. As one resident in Manchester claimed, 'You will hear a lot of talk about Manchester carrying on. I suppose we are … but as one who lives here it's a rather weary carrying on. We are carrying on because we've got to' (ibid:172). As Thoms explains, morale 'was a term often discussed by central government but rarely defined with any clarity' (1995:4). The London-centric view of a Blitz spirit overlooks differing levels of morale in various cities and locations across the nation. The image of relentless optimism among Londoners suited the interests of those responsible for maintaining morale. According to Heartfield, the Ministry of Information 'read great fortitude into the doughty Cockneys' 2005). Subsequently, ''We can take it' was the formulation of that response, an act of ventriloquism, where the establishment assumed the right to speak for the people' (ibid). Similarly, Connelly refers to what is remembered as the time when the 'few of Churchill's island stood shoulder to shoulder, regardless of class or creed, and withstood full terror, might and fury of the enemy' (Connelly, 2005:129).

This discussion has critically reflected on historical formations of Blitz mythology and considered stories that are often absent in popular accounts of wartime Britain. But this is not to suggest that the spirit of the Blitz and those characteristics that the myth evokes never occurred. Examples of communities pulling together, social optimism and the ability to cope under difficult circumstances should not be discounted or dismissed as untrue. These things certainly happened in some cases and there would have been expressions of defiance among

some sections of the public. Although Calder challenges the myth of the Blitz he also recognises the ways in which people did manage to cope, often in good spirits as well. For example, shops that had their front windows blown out would often open with signs out saying, 'More open than usual' or 'Blast!'. One pub opened with a sign saying, 'Our windows are gone but our spirits are excellent. Come in and try them' (1999:174). So to argue that Britain showed no spirit or ability to cope would be misleading and unfair in its own mythological form.

There was a variety of positive and negative socio-political features to consider in response to the Blitz. Some journalists 'created a myth of the cockney wisecracking over the ruins of his world, which is as famous as the myth of the Few soaring into battle with laughter on their lips, and equally misleading' (ibid:166). At the same time some journalists ran the risk of censorship and suppression when reporting angrily following what they had seen on the battlefronts and thus mobilising protest movements in response (ibid:165-166). During the autumn of 1940 the British government increased its pressure on the national press. The *Daily Mirror*'s criticisms towards a reshuffled war cabinet that saw Herbert Morrison appointed in the Home Office enraged Churchill (Ponting, 1990:154).[3] Churchill ordered Clement Atlee and Lord Beaverbrook to contact the newspaper and threaten them with complete censorship of news and opinion if they continued to criticise the government (ibid:154) . In one interview with the *Mirror* Atlee argued that 'the government did not mind criticism, but only what he described as 'irresponsible' criticism' (ibod:154). However, Atlee could not define what qualified as irresponsible criticism as he accused the newspapers of 'endangering the war effort but without any given examples' (ibid:154). So the notion of a

[3] 'The shifting or shunting of mediocrities or reputed successes appears to have been directed by no principle plain to the outsider, unless it be the principle that new blood must rarely be transfused into an old body' (*Daily Mirror*, 2nd October, 1940).

nation united is not upheld by historical details that reflect conflicts between the press and politicians as well as the critical accounts some journalists attempted to provide.

As this discussion has shown, there are many historical complexities that are not common features of popular storytelling and memories of wartime Britain. There were many different responses to the war, varying attitudes towards politicians, frictions among social groups, difficult decisions for journalists to make and political pressures influencing the way that they worked. These issues are all relevant to contemporary society. This book aims to examine how recontextualised accounts of mythological storytelling function ideologically across different historical contexts. The following chapters in this book will continue to account for these complexities and how they contribute in discourses of war, terrorism, identity, economics, race and immigration. This interdiscursive landscape is explored across a number of analytical chapters that are outlined below.

The structure of this book

As previously explained, I have developed and adopted DMA as an analytical, methodological and theoretical framework for analysing discursive constructions of mythology. My DMA framework is outlined in Chapter 2 where I distinguish the differences between ideology, discourse and mythology and explain how DMA approaches each of these concepts. In doing so, I clarify my neutral (but critical) approach to ideology and mythology before revisiting traditional approaches to CDA and its theoretical grounding in relation to language, power and society. Chapter 3 then recounts some of the literature that has previously considered media coverage of terrorism. Of course, this is a vast area of literature that stretches way beyond the scope of this book. Therefore, chapter 3 concentrates on those discussions that are particularly important and significant to the context of my study. Chapter

3 mainly accounts for previous literature on September 11th and the July 7th bombings whilst considering some of the subsequent issues that have occurred concerning discourses of Islam and national identity. Most of this book is then structured around the thematic focus of each analysis chapter. These discursive fields were identified in the quantitative data presented in chapter 4 where I provide a detailed, statistical overview of the 257 newspaper articles in my sample. My analysis chapters are then a compilation of both original research and previously published analysis (Kelsey, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b). It is important to bring this material together as one body of analysis that can consider the entire landscape of discursive complexities that occurred across a month long period after the bombings.

Chapter 5 analyses those discourses that established London as a city at war – a 'battle-scarred' city that knew how to respond. I then consider discourses of defiance and the heroism of Londoners responding on the 'front line'. This chapter considers how popular, Blitz myth slogans – like 'business as usual' and 'London can take it' – were used to evoke this defiance and heroism whilst considering other discursive elements that developed around these phrases. I parallel some of the propagandistic slogans from the Second World War with the language that was used to describe Londoners and perpetrators. I also consider some instances when discourses challenged the use of popular slogans by acknowledging feelings of fear and anxiety in London that contradicted constructions of a defiant, undeterred city.

Chapter 6 expands on the discourse of 'business as usual' in an analysis of articles about the stock market, economy and City traders. There was a recurring discourse in my sample that invoked the Blitz myth through analogies of the stock market and praised City traders for 'carrying on' after the bombings. I address the problems with this discourse, how it repeats elements of Blitz mythology, and how it suppressed other critical discourses of the class system and Western economics. I then account for articles that expressed anxieties about the financial impact that the bombings had and the way that economic concerns often

contradicted contemporary recontextualisations of the Blitz myth. Chapter 7 reflects on these discourses from a current perspective by flagging up the archetypal developments around bankers from their positive and heroic status after July 7th (Kelsey, 2012b) to their negative status since the financial crisis (Kelsey, 2014a).

Chapter 7 explores some mechanisms of national narration in discourses of Royalty, the VE-Day commemorations and war veterans. With the 60th anniversary commemorations falling on July 10th they provided the discursive conditions for links drawn between the fight that Britain endured in the Second World War and the threat it faced after July 7th. This enhanced the cross-generational connections of Londoners and Britain facing repeated attacks throughout history. This chapter considers the role that Royalty played after the bombings in their comments about the attacks, their visits to hospitals to meet survivors, and the Queen's image as a symbol of national solidarity and defiance. This chapter presents other complications in recontextualisations of Blitz mythology when the nostalgic mechanisms of national narration rejected Blair as a leader worthy of Churchillian status. These discourses often used the Queen as a national figurehead of British values and interests to denounce Blair as an inferior figure.

Chapter 8 analyses discourses of international unity, the 'special relationship', and Western foreign policy. I address the complexities of discourses that were critical and uncritical towards foreign policy and the messages of support that Britain received from other nations. Much of this chapter focusses on responses from American sources, including George W. Bush and Rudolph Guilliani, who invoked the Blitz myth in their praise for London's character and the historical unity between Britain and America. By considering critical discourses of British and American foreign policy, this chapter analyses the discourse of George Galloway after he blamed foreign policy and the war in Iraq as a motivation behind the attacks.

Chapter 9 critiques some of the right-wing discourses that occurred in nostalgic calls for a return to ‘traditional’, British values. This complicated recontextualised accounts of the Blitz myth since they evoked a sense of loss in British values and identity because responses to the bombings were not aggressive enough. These discourses suggested a disconnection with the past and fractures in British identity rather than a cross-generational continuation and embracement of British traditions. Interdiscursive elaborations blamed political correctness, European Union (EU) legislation and human rights laws for jeopardising the nation’s right to restore justice. This includes an analysis of 'Londonistan' as an Islamophobic discourse. This orientalist myth drew on nostalgic accounts of British traditions currently threatened by an Islamic war against the West and an Islamic army that has infiltrated into British society via lax immigration laws. In accounting for these discourses I consider the current context of Euroscepticism and criticisms of the EU that have supported the rise of UKIP and significantly impacted upon the UK’s position in the European parliament.

By juxtaposing the topics covered in each analysis chapter this book provides a rigorous account of the interdiscursive and intertextual labyrinth that has developed through the recontextualisation of Second World War mythology. This enables us to understand the ideological nuances of mythology and how DMA works to enhance our understanding of mythological storytelling. In Chapter 10 I develop these and other conclusions from my analysis whilst proposing some theoretical layers that refine our understanding of myth and how it operates across different historical contexts. My conclusion chapter also considers other significant events that have occurred since the bombings. These cases show how diachronic and synchronic connections and mechanisms continue to develop dimensions of national narration in mythological accounts of British identity. I then conclude by reflecting on the contribution that DMA and the material covered in this research make to our understanding of discourse, mythology and ideology.